



# Start the Conversation: New Yorkers Against Sexual Assault Toolkit



Office for the  
Prevention of  
Domestic Violence

- Every 68 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted (Department of Justice)
- More than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experience sexual violence (CDC)
- 47% of transgender people experience sexual violence (CDC)
- Women of color disproportionately experience sexual violence

## How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit provides definitions, conversation, and resources to Start the Conversation with the people in your life.

Talking more about sexual assault is an important first step to ending it.

The best way to use this toolkit:

**Do your research.** The resources in this toolkit will help you learn about sexual violence and consent, so you're prepared to answer common questions.

**Be clear about definitions.** Sexual assault is about power and control; it's not an accident or a miscommunication. Definitions are at the end of this toolkit.

**Be ready.** Once you've learned about the topic, think about who you want to talk to and the best way to talk about them (alone, with friends, in a group setting, etc.). There are many different people who can benefit from talking about sexual assault and you may need a different approach for each one. Check out the

different ways to Start the Conversation on the next page of this toolkit.

**Start the conversation!** There are so many ways to get involved to end gender-based violence. By bringing this difficult subject into the light, you're showing survivors that they aren't alone.

**Every conversation will be different.** Sometimes these conversations can be triggering or cause tension. Don't forget to take care of yourself throughout the process.

**Make sure you're heard.** These conversations are important but can be hard for many people to talk about. Some people aren't ready or may have difficulty hearing what you have to say. Remember to meet people where they are and know that you are making a difference just by bringing this topic into the light.

## Ways to Start the Conversation

Please note that some audiences may find this material triggering or difficult to read or watch and discuss. See resources at the end of the toolkit.

### Host a Documentary Viewing Party

- *The Hunting Ground* (2015, Netflix, College Audience)
- *Audrie & Daisy* (2016, Netflix, High School Audience)
- *The Invisible War* (2012, HBO, Military, General Audience)
- *I Am Evidence* (2017, HBO, General Audience)
- *At the Heart of Gold: Inside the USA Gymnastics Scandal* (2019, HBO, General Audience)



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New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline

Text: 844.997.2121

Call: 800.942.6906

Chat: [opdv.ny.gov](https://opdv.ny.gov)

Free. Confidential. 24/7.

Available in most languages

## Start a Reading Group

- *Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement* by Tarana Burke (2021)
- *Know My Name* by Chanel Miller (2019)
- *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* by Roxane Gay (2017)
- *Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do About It* by Kate Harding (2015)
- *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture* edited by Roxane Gay (2018)

## Talk About These PSAs

- [Who Are You?](#)
- [Men Can Stop Gender-Based Violence](#)

## Call it Out

- When you hear rape jokes or victim blaming say something.
- The best time to Start the Conversation is when people are engaging in harmful behavior that contributes to rape culture and blames victims for abuse.
- Sometimes people don't even realize that their words can have consequences about how we view sexual assault and victims.
- If you're not sure what to say, try:
  - "What did you mean by that?"
  - "Do you really think a victim wants to be assaulted?"
  - "How would you feel if that happened to you?"

## Post on Social Media

- Social media can be a great place to Start the Conversation.
- Post a graphic, ask a question, or share an article or video to get the conversation going.
- Make sure to tag @NYSOPDV

## More Conversation Starters

- Why do you think it's so hard to talk about sexual assault?
- Why do we find rape culture and "locker room talk" acceptable in society?
- How common do you think sexual assault is?
- What would you do if you witnessed someone being sexually harassed, abused, or assaulted?
- How can men and boys get involved in fighting against sexual assault?
- What's the best way we can support assault to get the help they need?
- What role does race and culture play in sexual assault?

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## Resources

- NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline is free, confidential, and available in most languages 24/7: call 800-942-6906, text 844-997-2121 and chat at [opdv.ny.gov](http://opdv.ny.gov)
- [What you need to know after you've been sexually assaulted](#)
- [Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network](#)
- [New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)
- [NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault](#)
- [Bystander Intervention Training](#)



## Definitions

**Gender-Based Violence:** Violence or threats that happen because of someone's sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other related characteristics.

**Sexual Violence:** Sexual violence includes sexual acts or activities that happen without consent. This may include rape, sexual assault, and sexual abuse. Sexual violence includes different types of unwanted physical contact including rape, molestation, groping, sexual abuse by an intimate partner and child sexual abuse, that may or may not be criminal.

**Sexual Assault:** Unwanted sexual contact through physical force, threats, guilt, manipulation, or coercion, with the goal of establishing power and control. Some victims are assaulted by a stranger, but most know their attacker. It may be a current or former intimate partner, a friend, an acquaintance, or a family member.

**Rape:** A type of sexual assault with actual or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth without the consent of the victim.

**Sexual Harassment:** Unwanted verbal or physical sexual advances, sexually explicit statements, or discriminatory remarks because of the victim's sex. Examples include requests for sexual favors, sexual comments or questions, offensive remarks about a person's sex or gender identity and expression, and unwanted messages or images that are sexual in nature.

**Sexual Abuse:** An ongoing pattern of unwanted sexual contact with the goal of establishing power and control. Sexual abuse usually occurs when the victim has less power than the abuser, such as a caretaker of a person with disabilities or an adult and a child.

**Rape Culture:** An environment with cultural norms, stereotypes and institutions that contributes to sexual violence, while ignoring the realities of sexual violence. The impact of rape culture is different for everyone but occurs across sex and gender.

**Consent:** Fully formed, freely given, and enthusiastic permission for what someone is okay with in relation to their body. A person cannot give consent if they are being physically forced, guilted, manipulated, threatened or coerced.

Consent can be taken back at any time and is not based on relationship status or consent given in the past.

Consent cannot be given if the person is underaged, incapacitated, sleeping, physically helpless, or has certain disabilities.



**Office for the  
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### New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

The Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) is the country's only executive level state agency dedicated to the issue of gender-based violence.

#### For more information, contact us:

518-457-5800

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